

present proactive information for parents. Sally Marchessault would speak about innovations that schools had done where a parent who worked full time or could only visit occasionally could do so. Dr. Sheridan from the Department of Adult Education would talk about programs to help parents improve parenting skills and programs for parents with specific needs. Dr. Lancaster would be talking about human relations as it applied to and affected the local school community. Dr. Vance had suggested that the parent specialists for the area offices be present that evening and explain their services for parents.

Mrs. Friedman reported that in November they would hear from the area vice presidents about the innovative programs they had planned. In the new year, they would see this continuity where they would look at the mentoring program, family math, etc. They were trying to establish linkages so that they could know more about opportunities for parents to be involved.

Dr. Shoenberg thought this sounded like a very well thought-out program. He wondered if sometime during the year they could devote some time to bring to parents some of the parent-related national issues. The "choice" issue was on the front burner these days, and the pro-choice movement was picking up a lot of steam. There were a number of other significant issues like the Sondheim Commission report. It would be important for parents to understand how some of these recommendations were likely to affect things in Montgomery County. Mrs. Friedman thought this was another definition for parent involvement. She felt that this was a very good suggestion and a good topic for one of the delegate assemblies.

Mrs. Praisner suggested that perhaps "choice" as an issue might not be as significant for the State of Maryland as the Sondheim Commission and some of the other issues. The state PTA convention would have sessions on some of those issues. She hoped that at some point they might look at making sure parents were aware of the services of the ombudsman and his role. Dr. Cronin said parents should be aware of active support groups within the PTAs, parents to parents. Mrs. Friedman agreed that this was important as well as the adopt-a-school approach with parents helping a school that might need some help in that area.

Mrs. Mary Ann Bowen, Area 1 co-vice president, reported that traditionally in her area they had always had an open house at the area office in the beginning of the year. This year she and Mrs. Feldman thought it was more important to do some outreach to PTAs. Therefore, with the cooperation of the area office staff, they were visiting each cluster during the month of October. The area office had the first half of the meeting, and the second half was devoted to support activities with new PTA presidents and executive boards. The attendance had been excellent. They had defined the role of the PTA as a support group and help that was available to the local PTA. Their November and March assemblies would focus on ESOL, and they had asked each PTA to focus in some way on ESOL families in their community.

Mrs. Charlotte Joseph, area 2 co-vice president, reported that at their first meeting they had asked the cluster coordinators to spell out what they liked best and least about being a cluster coordinator and what their goals were for the coming year. What they liked best was working with people including PTAs, staff, and community and being advocates for children and their families. What they liked least was lengthy and frequent meetings. The top two goals were keeping communities working together and helping to resolve conflicts among parents, principals, and teachers. Their November delegate assembly would be on parent involvement -- too little or too much.

Mrs. Sally Schneider, Area 3 vice president, said that they met in late August and discussed goals which focused on continued emphasis on communication including communication between clusters, within MCCPTA, with the school system, and at the state level. They also discussed the importance of dissemination of information. Other goals involved parent involvement, gyms, and family stress. She had asked Ann Meyer to discuss protocols in dealing with problems. In October they had discussed elementary school physical education, and next month they would talk about the challenge of involving non-English speaking parents. This year they planned to look at the role of the guidance counselor at all levels and do a work shop on the role of the PTA treasurer.

Dr. Cronin said that everyone had a different definition on the role of a parent, but everything he had heard this evening was something he could support. He would put a primary emphasis on the academic achievement of each child and how the PTA could be supportive of the parent who wished to see this happen. Mr. Goldensohn remarked that his wife was an elementary school teacher, and the most common problem was the lack of parental involvement with their children. Even if the parent looked at homework, discussed current events, and supervised television viewing, the child learned more. The child that was slipping probably had a parent who was not involved. Teachers could do just so much if the parent wasn't there. Too many parents just went to work, fed their children, clothed them, and forgot about the schooling part. He would like all of them to work on individual parents with their individual children.

Mrs. Hobbs recalled that Back-to-School Night was well attended, and at the elementary level parents participated in parent/teacher conferences. Parents had to be comfortable in a school. It would be good to have PTA do something for parents coming to Back-to-School Night or to their first parent/teacher conference. She suggested putting something in the PTA newsletters to explain what should happen in a parent/teacher conference and make sure teachers and principals agree. People on both sides should understand that this conference is not threatening. Some parents do not see the school as always reaching out to help them or to answer questions.

Mrs. Vicki Rafel explained that one thing that was difficult for MCCPTA to do was to make materials available for local PTAs to use. For example, NEA and the national PTA had done a video tape in

Montgomery County about how to have a parent conference. There were leaflets about helping children with homework. She suggested that staff learn about the availability of these materials to make use of them. Mrs. Mallon added that MCPS had also done a program dealing with the issue of conferences, and in the Blair Cluster another one would be produced on interactive television. Dr. Pitt explained that the first of these programs started yesterday. The theme was "Education is a Shared Responsibility." They were trying to use television as a tool. Channel 60 carried the program last night, and it was a phone-in program on strategies in homework. He thought that Mrs. Hobbs had made a good point. The key was to get the parent who was interested but who had negative feelings about the school or was afraid to go where they did not feel comfortable. Staff had talked to principals and teachers about seeking out that parent to try to develop a positive relationship with the parents.

Mrs. Bowen remarked that as they went around the clusters they were brainstorming about what PTAs could do in terms of outreach to draw parents in. One suggestion was to have a parents' night for ESOL, which had worked in some schools. In other cases it had not because it had been difficult to get the staff for that additional night. Dr. Shoenberg noted that there was a large number of people who did not read newsletters or watch Channel 60. There had to be some mode of communication worked out. For example, in the Richard Montgomery community every parent was called before Back-to-School Night. He pointed out that just as some children couldn't read, some parents couldn't read and they were not necessarily ESOL parents. Mrs. Mallon thought they needed to network all of these successful practices such as the Richard Montgomery program. For example, at Travilah they had borrowed the idea of new parent teas from the Takoma Park community. Mrs. Friedman recalled that several years ago Area 1 had started an exchange of ideas among PTA presidents, and now Area 3 was doing this. She noted that PTAs could have a cultural arts program in the evening and share information with parents at that time.

Mrs. Praisner hoped that when the Board discussed parental involvement this would become one of the school system's goals. She further hoped that the documentation on November 2 would codify to some extent some of the things so that they could share. People did not know what was being done when they were part of a large school system. She thought what was very exciting was the variety of things that were being included in the PTA newsletters these days and in a variety of languages.

Dr. Cronin asked if anyone had checked to see whether there were grants available for publications of successful parent involvement programs or techniques. If there were, the PTA could develop a book of networking among PTAs. Mrs. Joseph replied that under the new regulations there was no money for parent involvement under Chapter I. Mrs. Rafel pointed out that it was an art to write grant proposals, and most PTA people did not have those skills.

Mr. Ewing thought the MCCPTA's emphasis on parent involvement was

both right and essential. A child's success was clearly a function of parental involvement to a very large degree, and the system's success was a function of parental involvement. Montgomery County flourished because parents were involved. However, there were substantial numbers of parents who were not listening because they really were not interested in being involved. Not because they did not care about their children, but they had other interests and concerns. Those children would be in trouble in the future. He hoped that as they pursued parental involvement they did not lose sight of the fact for some children, that would not be enough. The school system had to pick up on its responsibility for those children. They were facing a time when school systems were going to have to think about different roles for themselves as advocates for children whose parents were not involved. However, this not mean that they should give up on the efforts to involve parents. They had made gains due to the efforts of the PTA, but it was an uphill battle for everyone. While this was a major focus, it was not the only one they needed to pursue.

Dr. Pitt commented that children learned from role modeling primarily, and they learned from adults. Role modeling was critical in the early years even before formal schooling. His goal was to get parents to understand some of those responsibilities and needs. A lot of parents did not know the simple things that parents should do such as exposing children to a variety of experiences. He believed that there would have to be extensive day care of young children that did do some of that modeling. A child coming to school without these developmental skills was a child at risk. This was not just a Montgomery County concern, it was a national concern.

Dr. Cronin recalled a discussion with Interages. Efforts were being made to bring senior citizens into the school to serve as grandparents to certain children. Mrs. Mallon said they wanted parents to know that there were a lot of things parents could do at home with their child if they did not have time to come into the school.

Ms. Serino saw a parallel between parental involvement and student involvement. She thought there had to be a joint effort with student leadership. A lot of PTAs involved students to attend their meetings. The PTA should continue reaching out to students. She liked the idea of targeting parents who worked full time. One of her goals was increased drug education for students, and sometimes it was easier to make things happen in schools when the student leadership and the PTA leadership joined forces.

In regard to one's perception of parental involvement, Mrs. DiFonzo said that when she talked about parents taking an active role in their children's education, she was talking about just that. She was not talking about developing the political activist because that would happen anyway. She cited her experience at one PTA meeting in California where no one ever spoke to her or shared information. She suggested that if they were going to get parents involved, it had to be one to one, neighbor talking to neighbor. When she had been a PTA

president in Montgomery County, they had set up partnerships within neighborhoods using parents who felt comfortable in working with children on reading skills and others who worked on math skills. Children would go to other people's homes. She was convinced that unless people were walked through the process and helped they would not know how to get involved.

Mrs. DiFonzo remarked that in this huge bureaucracy people needed to know how the pieces fit together and how to work that system. People had to know to start with the building principal when they had a problem and then the area office. Lots of things could get settled without having to go to the level of the Board of Education if people worked through the process.

Dr. Cronin asked if there were ways in which the Board could help MCCPTA this year. Mrs. Friedman replied that the Board and the executive staff had already started by attending their meetings and providing information. Mrs. Mallon commented that the real key to success in a particular school was the communication between principal and the PTA. She suggested that it would be great for principals to be able to know how to work with the PTA. Principals and PTA presidents could share successful practices at some type of meeting. Mrs. Joseph called attention to the latest issue of EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP where two studies were cited. Both studies said that it didn't matter what the family income was, what the family size was, what language they spoke, etc. The only thing that mattered were the school practices. The PTA could reach out, but the local school and the principal also needed to reach out.

Mr. Goldensohn pointed out that it was still the parent TEACHER association. Both sides of the table had to make sure that the "T" stayed involved. The parents could help by making the teacher welcome at meetings. When it was a PTSA, there was an "S" to be involved. Mrs. Mallon commented that if the principal was involved, the teachers were involved. Mr. Goldensohn said that many schools had luncheons and teas for the teachers on an informal basis to make teachers and parents feel comfortable.

Mrs. Praisner asked that Mrs. Joseph share information about the conference she had attended. Any materials available would be helpful for the Board's November 2 meeting on parent involvement in Montgomery County.

Mrs. Mallon reported that MCCPTA was actively advising local PTAs to stay clear of negotiations. She knew that the budget process was going to come up for discussion. MCCPTA would like to have an opportunity to have early input on the budget. If there were going to be changes in the operating budget process, they would like the opportunity to be involved. In regard to the public hearings on the budget, they would like to organize themselves by cluster. The hearing nights would not necessarily have to be by area, but by allowing them to testify by cluster it would make better use of the time and have better quality testimony. This worked very well with the capital budget. Mrs. Mallon suggested that if they wanted

parental involvement in the budget then MCPS should send out a survey in the spring. There was also the suggestion of having a joint committee working with staff on the budget.

In regard to budget testimony, Dr. Shoenberg remarked that if they were to assign each cluster a time rather than assigning a few minutes to every school in the cluster, there might be some economies of scale here. When individual schools testified, much of what they said was quite repetitive. He would be willing to give each cluster a set amount of time.

Mrs. Bowen stated that there were two things involved. One was a new budget process, and the other was what they had right now and what they had to deal with this year. She said that the other part of this was not losing the voice of the local PTA. She was suggesting that if they could set up cluster testimony and yet allow each local PTA to have a voice in that testimony, they would have better quality testimony. Mrs. Praisner asked if PTAs would feel comfortable if the testimony were made by the cluster coordinator about the overarching themes with specific comments about specific schools. Mrs. Bowen explained that this was the way in which they testified in front of the County Council.

Dr. Pitt commented that there was another difference here. When they got to the Council, the testimony was focused on the budget that was left. Therefore, testimony could be coordinated. At the superintendent and Board level, that was not the case because people were still looking at what could be added or subtracted. He thought the idea of having the clusters coordinate the testimony was a very good idea. Mrs. Bowen remarked that they needed some direction from the Board as to whether they should try to work this out. Mrs. Joseph reminded them that the PTAs were not the only ones testifying on the operating budget.

Mr. Ewing thought it was important that they make sure the local PTA got an opportunity to be heard as well as other local organizations. The four nights of testimony provided him with a great deal of information. If they were inefficient, so was democracy. The nights of testimony provided local PTAs an opportunity to be heard by their elected officials. He would not want them to preclude that by anything they did.

Dr. Cronin noted that the Board was receiving correspondence on gymnasiums. He pointed out that the Board was faced with a restriction imposed by the county. Mrs. DiFonzo said that the letters asked why the Board didn't understand the importance of physical education; however, this essentially had been removed from the hands of the Board. Mrs. Schneider explained that MCCPTA was working now with school facilities personnel. They were working toward a general policy that would be acceptable to everyone and be able to go to the County Council and say they had a policy concerning elementary gyms. Mrs. Praisner asked them to help educate the PTAs that were now sending letters to the Board. Mrs. Schneider replied that she had requested this be on the MCCPTA agenda in November.

Mr. Goldensohn reported that at the October 10 meeting he had introduced a resolution which was a reaffirmation of basic Board policy and thought on gymnasiums. The purpose of this was to educate people about the Board's views. If the Board had budget control, there would be a gym on every building where there was space. Mrs.

Bowen suggested sending this to cluster coordinators and PTAs after the Board adopted it.

Mr. Fess noted that the state PTA convention would be held on November 10 and 11. He asked if MCCPTA wanted to emphasize any special events or activities. Mrs. Mallon pointed out that one of the speakers would be Kathleen Kennedy Townsend who was going to talk about community involvement. The banquet would be Saturday evening, and she hoped Board members would be able to attend.

In regard to communications, Mrs. Mallon remarked that PTA presidents received notices from the school system; however the officers of MCCPTA and the area vice presidents never received materials. She thanked the members of the Board for taking the time to meet with MCCPTA. They had planned another meeting in the spring.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

HP:mlw